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SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

STATE FOR EB, DRL/IL, WHA/PPC, WHA/EPSC, AND WHA/CEN
STATE PASS AID FOR LAC/CEN
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COMMERCE FOR CENSUS

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: HONDURAS ISSUES 2001 CENSUS FIGURES; POPULATION
TOPS 6.5 MILLION

1. (U) On October 18, National Institute of Statistics (INE) Director Magdalena Garcia presented the numbers from the 2001 census to Acting President Vicente Williams. The last census in Honduras was conducted in 1988 and INE utilized the 1988 statistics during the presentation as a reference point for comparisons. Projected numbers for 2015 were also featured.

(Note: The following statistics are the national average unless specified. End Note.)

2. (U) The population of Honduras is currently 6,535,344, up from 4,614,377 in 1988, with 44.8 percent of the people living in urban areas. A growth rate of 2.64 percent per year (down from a 3.11 rate of growth in 1988) leads INE to estimate the population to reach approximately 8,958,301 in the year 2015. Average life expectancy has increased from 65 years in 1988 to 71 years in 2001.

3. (U) To determine the poverty level, the definition of people with "unsatisfied basic necessities" was utilized. From this, INE determined that 65.5 percent are living in poverty while 47.4 percent are living in extreme poverty. In the eastern department of Gracias a Dios on the Caribbean coast, almost 90 percent of the people are living at or below the poverty level. Teenage mothers have increased in number from 20,113 in 1988 to 32,475 in 2001. On the positive side, the literacy rate of persons 15 years old and above has jumped from 66 percent in 1988 to 80 percent in 2001.

4. (U) Other census statistics are currently being processed and finalized. For further information, refer to the INE website at <http://www.ine.online.hn>.

5. (SBU) Comment: PolOffs previously met October 16 with Garcia to discuss Honduran statistical issues as they related to labor and human rights issues. Garcia, who is favorably known to Post and has a strong background as a statistician, was confident that the census figures were accurate. This was despite the fact that the numbers were gathered by a temporary executive branch agency established solely for the census that left the raw data for INE to tabulate and analyze. Garcia said she had been besieged by requests from congressmen for detailed census information and that she was determined to put everything on the Internet to have the information available to all (and to reduce requests on her relatively small staff). INE also collaborates with the Honduran Central Bank on economic statistical issues. End Comment.

6. (U) Post will be sending septel in the coming month with a more detailed USAID analysis of the 2001 census, including more comparisons to the 1988 census.

PIERCE